



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

down. It drieth the braine, dimmeth the sight, vitiateth the smell, hurteth the stomach, destroyeth the concoction, disturbeth the humors and spirits, corrupteth the breath, induceth a trembling of the limbes, exsiccateh the wind-pipe, lungs, and liver, annoyeth the milt, scorcheth the heart, and causeth the blood to be adusted. Moreover it eliquateth the pinguie substance of the kidnies, and absumeth the geniture. In a word, it overthroweth the spirits, perverteth the understanding, and confoundeth the senses with a sudden astonishment, and stupiditie of the whole body. All which hurts I affirme, that the immoderate and intempestive use of Tobacco doth effect, both by reason of its temperament, but especially, through the property of its substance: wherefore the use of it is only tolerable by way of physick, not for pleasure or an idle custome."

"To conclude therefore, I wish them that desire to have *mentem sanam in corpore sano*, altogether to abandon *insanum praeposterunque Tobacci usum*. This is all which seemed good unto me to be written of Tobacco's fume, partly for shewing the right manner of using it, but especially for reproving the too licentious, liberall, and intempestive taking of it, which very many in these dayes, do to their own ruine lewdly, and for want of better employment foolishly effect."



FOR THE NORTH-AMERICAN JOURNAL.

Sir,

IN offering for your Journal the following piece of biography, I should assign to you some of the reasons which induced me to take up what may be considered a singular subject. A professor of Astronomy at Bologna, had made a prophecy that the world would come to an end on the 18th of July last; and this fanatical prediction being noised abroad, found many believers among the ignorant and credulous, in various countries of Europe, and gave rise to some extravagances. While this was a toptick of conversation, I happened to be engaged in

perusing some volumes of Luther's works, in which I found several passages relating to a similar extravagance, though carried to much greater lengths of this Stiefel, who was celebrated among the early reformers for his zeal, and was also eminent for his skill in mathematicks. Having taken some notes, and finding that Bayle had given a very imperfect account of him in his article *Steifelius*; I was induced to compose the following sketch, founded on the mention made of him in different works. A case of similar fanaticism resembling this in several particulars, occurred a few years since in Hampshire county, Massachusetts.

To the Editor,

Michael Stiefel, one of the first German reformers, was born at Esseling, in the year 1496. His education was of course catholic; and he seems early to have been entered in some religious house, for he was early a professed Augustine.¹ It was his misfortune, however, to live in very troublesome times, and to have at once, talents which urged him to take an active part in them, and a temper which prevented him from behaving with the coolness and consistency they required. While he was still in the flower and fervour of his youth, the reformation which shook all Germany to its centre, first broke out, and he was not of a disposition or an age to look quietly on. How soon he began to engage in the controversy, or what was the progress of his opinions, is no longer to be ascertained; but his discipleship to Luther's doctrines was so prompt,² that the editor of Weller's letter speaking of the early converts of the reformation adds, "*quorum quoque primus fuit Michael Stiffelius*"³—and it was so bold and decisive, that in 1522, he had been already called

¹ Buck's *Geschichte des Mathematik in Preussen*, p. 34.

² It seems, that he changed so early as to lie still under the civil power of the Catholics, for Luther tells him, "you were able to remain silent *a long time* under the Catholics," &c. *Works of Luther*, Halle edit. xxii. p. 1974. He must therefore, have changed very early, for it was only in 1519, that the Reformation, properly speaking, was commenced, and in 1522, he was already a protestant preacher.

³ *Acta Borussica* ii. 686.

as an evangelical preacher to Mansfeld.⁴ His talents were considerable, his learning probably still greater, and his zeal certainly beyond both; so that he was a man well calculated to make an impression in times of change and confusion, like those in which he lived. We accordingly find him early mentioned with great kindness and confidence by Luther;⁵ and what is still more remarkable, and not a little to the credit of Luther's character, which has sometimes been called in question in this respect, this kindness followed his friends, after his confidence in them must have been lost. But, though he was calculated to make an impression, he was not calculated long to support it; and it is not therefore, surprising, that he soon left his people, and for a time his profession. When this change took place, is as uncertain as most of the other circumstances of his early life; but in 1527, he had already been a private teacher in the family of some Austrian Nobleman,⁶ whose name is not mentioned; and in 1528, he was again a preacher of the reformed doctrines, with a parish and a support at Lochau, which Luther thought very good,⁷ and where he married the widow of the Bishop of Lochau.⁸ This situation however, he also abandoned, partly perhaps, from his natural fickleness, and partly from a desire of being nearer to Luther, whom he loved, and in the heat of the controversy, which he loved still more—and was settled again in Holzendorf, in the neighbourhood of Wittenberg, the head-quarters of Luther and the reformation.⁹

⁴ See Luther's Letter to Wolphiango Stein, 17th March, 1522, in Schülze's collection of Luther's Letters ii. 44.

⁵ See Luther's Letters to Stiefel in the collection ora, etc. T. F. Buddei Epis. lxxxii. lxxxiii. lxxxiv. xcii. and cxcix. See too, his two letters to Stiefel justifying his marriage, Works x. 798. 801.

⁶ Buck's Geschichte, p. 34.

⁷ Luther's Letter to John Agricola. Aurifaber's collection, ii. 386.

⁸ See Epist. 667, in the Halle edit. of Luther's Works. Tom. xxi p. 1125.

⁹ Welleri Epistola. It is necessary here to say something of this chief document in the history of Stiefel. Peter Weller, its author, was brother of the famous Jerome Weller, the theologian, and lived now at Wittenberg. At the instance of Luther, he went to Holzendorf, to hear Stiefel preach on the 3d October, and on the 17th November. Immediately following, he wrote this letter to Johannes Brismannus, describing all he had seen and heard. It was first published with a preface, and from the Autograph in the Acta Borussica, tom. ii. 686, 697.

This, however, was a dangerous moment for a man even of a much firmer and cooler temper than Stiefel, to commence the difficult task of explaining the scriptures. The theologians, who before had known no more of the Bible than was to be found in their Breviaries and Psalters, now had the whole thrown open before them—and in a superstitious age, and among a rude people, where the belief in Alchemy and Astrology was general, the dark mysteries of the prophets and the revelations would naturally command all interest and faith. The true Anti-Christ was easily found by Luther and his friends to be the power of the Romish church, of whose approaching and fearful overthrow the visions of Patmos gave indications not to be mistaken,¹⁰ and the war with the Turks was no less obviously the tremendous one foreseen by Daniel wasting the earth, the close of which would be speedily followed by the final end of all things.¹¹ These were the two chief points of biblical inquiry,¹² upon which the learning and imagination of the times were wasted, and which carried captive the judgment and good sense of nearly all who ventured into the theological or political warfare of the reformation.

Stiefel's ardour could not be expected to grow indifferent on topicks of such universal interest and such appalling importance as these. He had learnt enough from his correspondence and intercourse with Luther,¹³ and the

¹⁰ Luther's Works, Tom. xxii. cap. 27.

¹¹ Luther's Works, Tom. xxii. cap. 51, § 5.

¹² Among other strange discoveries of this period, it was found, that the art of Printing was the horse in the Revelations, on which the word of God rode. Morhoff Polyhist, tom. i. lib. iv c. 2, § 6.

¹³ There can be no doubt that this was Luther's firm persuasion, though he fixed no particular time for it. The following may be considered sufficiently distinct proofs. 1. Melancthon was a believer in Astrology, (Declamationes i. 110, 111, and ii. 376,) and having cast the nativity of Charles V, their common enemy, had found he would live to his 84th year. "Nay," said Doctor Luther, "that cannot be, Ezekiel is against *that*, the world standeth not so long." Works, tom. xxii. c. 70, § 4. 2. Even after the misfortune of poor Stiefel, and so late as 1536, he said, "We have got along in the Revelations as far as the white horse. The world cannot stand much longer." Ibid. c. li. § 4. 3. At another time he says, the world will doubtless come to an end at Easter, *since* it was formed then, since Pharaoh then perished in the Red Sea, &c. He does not, however, say posi-

early reformers to be fully persuaded, that the end of the world was, in the language of scripture, already at the door. He was, moreover, from genius and habit an adroit mathematician; and being, therefore, dissatisfied with conclusions so vague as those of his more cautious friends were, and thinking it, at any rate, not well in such critical times to bury the talents which had been committed to him, he began to inquire with more precision exactly when this time would come. Partly by a calculation of the squares of some numbers which he imagined he had found in the scriptures; partly by the easy method of translating important words of the New-Testament numerically, in which he has been followed with singular success by many more recent theologians, and partly by twenty other arguments,¹⁴ which an unbelieving age has suffered to be forgotten, he at last discovered, a short time¹⁵ only before the decisive moment, that the final end of all things would happen on Monday, 3d October, 1533, at 8 o'clock, A. M.¹⁶

As soon as he had made this fearful discovery, he hastened to announce it to Luther, not doubting that he would receive it as a revelation, since he had so often and so decisively predicted the speedy destruction of the

tively the Easter then next following, though it is apparent he thought so. Ib. § 9, and § 1. Bayle seems to have doubted whether Luther ever said this. See his article Stiefel C—. Indeed it was the universal opinion of the reformers of that time, that the day of judgment was very near.

¹⁴ Luther's Works xxii. p. 1973. See the list of Stiefel's Works, post.

¹⁵ How short a time, I do not know. The earliest notice with a date that I find, is a fragment of a letter of Luther, written August 26, 1533, when Stiefel was first brought before the magistrates. It begins;—*Nihil hic novarum nisi quod Michael Stiefel, cum sua tuba septima nobis prophetat diem extremum hoc anno, etc.* Schültze's collection, tom. ii. p. 292.

¹⁶ He seems to have had no difficulty, in determining the year, day, and hour; but was in doubt, whether it were A. M. or P. M. This he settled as follows:—Christ chose to rise on the first day of the week, *because* it was the best day, and in the same way he chose the morning, because it was the best part of the day. The morning therefore, is the more worthy portion of the day. Ergo, the judgment will come in the morning. Welleri Epist. p. 696. Does any body say this is the reasoning of a crazy man? It is as good as Luther's to prove the judgment will come in the *Spring*. See ante.

world, and, indeed, gone so far as to pray for it himself, and bid others to pray for it.¹⁷ The sturdy reformer, however, was not so easily satisfied with a mathematical exegesis of the Revelations, and took some pains to persuade his vehement disciple, that he was not so much of a critick or prophet as he imagined.¹⁸ Stiefel was at first grieved¹⁹, and then angry, and finally left him, telling him that the spirit of God had gone out of him, and calling him a Herod and a Pilate.²⁰

At Holzendorf, however, he found easier converts. His learning was sufficient in his village,²¹ and of his zeal and honesty, there was no doubt any where. He had, therefore, the confidence of his people, and did not fail to persuade them. They received his awful annunciation as the last solemn warning of their spiritual friend and instructor; and bent before the coming judgment of heaven in simple faith and penitence. Indeed, their persuasion was so perfect, that, in the tumult of their fears, they abandoned all secular occupations—left their families and their farms,²² and gave themselves up entirely to a suitable preparation for their approaching change. Doctrines like these, appealing to passions so deep and dangerous, must at once succeed, or, at once fail. Unfortunately Stiefel's succeeded. The report and influence of his preaching extended rapidly, and brought him hearers and converts from all the neighbouring towns;²³ a small tract, which he immediately published, containing his twenty-two articles,²⁴ with an explanation and proofs, spread the infection still further, and in a very short time, the

¹⁷ He commanded a preacher by the name of Jonah, "teach your church earnestly to pray for the day of the Lord, for the world will never be any better." Works xxii. p. 1981. He himself often wishes and prays for it. Works xxii. c. 51 passim.

¹⁸ Works of Luther xxii. c. li. § 2.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Causabatur spiritum in eo extinctum esse, interim Pilatum et Herodem appellans. Welleri Epist. p. 689.

²¹ Luther bears testimony to this by saying, he now gave away his books, furniture, &c. as things he should no more want. Works xxii. p. 1977.

²² Mochsen's Geschichte ii. 427.

²³ Confluebat enim eo ingens multitudo, eaque promiscua. Welleri Epist. 689.

²⁴ See the list of his Works, No. 1.

whole country about him was in commotion. It at last went so far, that the government became alarmed, and he was arrested and brought to Wittemberg, August 26, as a disturber of the peace.²⁵ Here it would probably have gone hard with him, if justice had been left to take its natural course ; but Luther, whose charity, though offended, had not been exhausted, interceded for him, and he was released on a promise that he would not again preach such distempered doctrines.²⁶

At first, he was faithful to his promise ; but, as the decisive day approached, he began to feel that silence was a culpable dereliction of duty.²⁷ He had, moreover, discovered, that he was the seventh angel mentioned in the revelations ;²⁸ and after discussing the whole matter again with Luther, at Wittemberg, on the 28th September,²⁹ he returned home, declaring that no power on earth should prevent him from blowing his trumpet.³⁰

On Friday, the last day of September,³¹ he, therefore, began his preaching again, with the double merit in the eyes of his hearers, of having already withstood one persecution and now braving another. On Saturday, the whole country was again assembled at Holzendorf,³² to listen to the final exhortations of their prophet to repentance, and confession, and communion. The whole of Sunday was occupied in hearing the confessions of the multitudes who resorted to him from all quarters to the distance of forty miles.³³ Early the next morning, the congregation again assembled in the church,³⁴ which was solemnly prepared for the occasion.³⁵ Stiefel again ascended the pulpit

²⁵ See Luther's Letters, Schültze's collection ii. 291, 292, and Welleri Epist. 689, 690.

²⁶ Welleri Epist. p. 689.

²⁷ Welleri Epist. 690.

²⁸ Luther's works xxii. 1977.

²⁹ Luther's works xxii. p. 1973—75.

³⁰ Moehsen Geschichte der Wissenschaften in der Mark Brandenburg ii. 427.

³¹ Welleri Epist. 690.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ There were now converts present, who came even from Silesia. Ibid. 689.

³⁵ Videmus omnia satis sollemniter esse instructa. Welleri Ep. 692.

in unhesitating confidence—explained, for the last time, his doctrine, and, for the last time, convicted his opponents of their error and obstinacy. He divided the scripture generally into two parts, verbal and mathematical;³⁶ and proceeded, in a regular discourse, to prove, what a few moments would decide, that this day had been distinctly pointed out in both parts as the day of final judgment.³⁷ As the hour approached, his tone changed from argument to exhortation. He bade the people be of good cheer—administered the sacrament—and, when the final moment had arrived, cried out with a kind of prophetick confidence and exultation!—*veniet! veniet!*—and descended from the pulpit.³⁸ He was answered, amid the solemn silence that followed, by the broken sobs and cries of the multitude, who stood in dread expectation of the coming event.³⁹ The hour, however, which had been so precisely designated, passed, and the prophecy was still not fulfilled. The people began to gather courage, and Stiefel began to be uneasy. At this critical moment, a thunder-storm happened to come up, which he instantly announced as the precursor of the Judgment, since Christ had declared he should come in the clouds.⁴⁰ The congregation were again thrown into their fears and lamentations; but this, too, passed by. Still they remained in anxious expectation, till the hours grew wearisome from the abatement of their apprehensions, and their appetites importunate, from their long fasting. Some of those, who were the most bold and the most hungry, now ventured out of the church, and the rest soon followed; but as they had literally taken no thought for the morrow, from a sincere persuasion that the morrow would never come, they found themselves absolutely without means to satisfy their immediate appetite.⁴¹ In their rage and mortification, they were as unreasonable as they had

³⁶ Duo sunt in scripturis sanctis, verbum et numerus mathematicus. Ib. 695.

³⁷ His only considerable difficulty was in the words, “of that day and hour no man knoweth;” but, as he well answered, it is not said no man *will* know. Welleri Epist. 693.

³⁸ Welleri Ep. p. 696.

³⁹ Tum demum coorta est vociferatio et clamor muliercularum ejulantium et plorantium, etc. Well. ib.

⁴⁰ Moehsen's Geschichte ii. 247.

⁴¹ Moehsen. l. c.

just been in their fanatical confidence. They seized Stiefel and carried him to Wittemberg, where he was obliged publicly to confess his errors;⁴² but Luther's kindness did not yet forsake him; and, partly by his influence, and partly by the persuasions of the publick authorities, the people of Holzendorf were induced to receive him quietly again, till he should be suitably placed elsewhere.⁴³

After this, the notices of him again become rare. In 1534, he received an appointment at Jena,⁴⁴ on account of his talents in mathematicks, but does not seem to have remained there long, for we soon find him preaching again at Halberstrahm,⁴⁵ near Königsberg. The famous controversy of Osiander,⁴⁶ which Luther had predicted from his restless temper,⁴⁷ excited Stiefel once more, and carried him so far, that he was obliged to leave this parish, and take one less considerable, but more quiet, at Pruck, where he lived in 1557. At last, to withdraw himself entirely from the theology of the times, which had for forty years ruined all his peace and enjoyment, he returned to Jena⁴⁸ 1559, where he taught, either as a professor or a private instructor, till about the time of his death, which happened April 17, 1567.⁴⁹

His works, as far as I have been able to discover, are as follows:—1. His famous little tract on the end of the world, of which I find two titles so entirely different, and in books of such unquestioned accuracy, that there must have been two editions.

Rechenbüchlein vom Ende Christi sive Apocalypsis in Apocalypsin. Wittemb. 1533. [*A little book of reckonings concerning the coming of Christ, or a revelation of the Revelations.*] Mylius de Anonym. No. 2258.

The other is,—Eine sehr wunderbarliche Warterrechnung. sammt einigen Merckzahlen Danielis und der Offenba-

⁴² Welleri Epis. 696. 697.

⁴³ Moehsen ii. 427.

⁴⁴ Beyer's Syllabus Prof. et Rect. Jenae p. 517.

⁴⁵ Praef. in Epist. Welleri, Act. Boruss. ii. 687.

⁴⁶ The controversy of Osiander was on the question, whether Christ would have come into the world, if there had been no sin. Luther's Letters to Osiander and Agricola passim.

⁴⁷ Works xii. 1044.

⁴⁸ Beyer ad ann.

⁴⁹ Beyer ad ann.

rung St. Johannis. Regensburg. 1533. [*A very remarkable reckoning on words, together with some signs and numbers, from Daniel and the revelation of St. John.*] Morhoff: Polyhist. T. i. L. iv. c. 2. § 6.

2. Arithmetica integra cum praeefatione Philippi Melancthonis. Norimb. 1545. Voss de Univers. Math. p. 317. § 11. This was a book of very great merit for its time, and is still referred to by mathematicians. It is very remarkable too, that Stiefel here laid down the first principles of Logarithms. Wolf Element. Math. univers. T. v. p. 29 § 7. and p. 75. § 14.

3. Eine Deutsche Rechenkunst 1545. [*A German Arithmetick.*] Buck p. 37.

4. Ein Rechenbuch von der Deutschen und Welschen Praktik. 1546. 4to. [*An Arithmetick according to German and Italian practice.*] Voss, l. c.

5. Heilbronn in his Hist. Mathes. Univers. p. 786, 787, says there is in the Vatican a MS. with the title, "Mich. Stiefelii summa Elementorum Euclidis."

6. Of the German poem on the conformity of the doctrines of Luther to those of Christ, mentioned by Bayle, I find no sufficient notice.



FOR THE NORTH-AMERICAN JOURNAL.

Sir,

The following copy of some very slight memoranda, made during an excursion principally on foot, the last summer, is at your disposal. The party consisted of two; in this sketch of a journal, the pronouns *I*, and *we*, are used indiscriminately—it did not appear to me, worth the trouble of any alteration, to make the phraseology more consistent: at any rate, I hope you will receive this trifle, which has accidentally escaped destruction, as a slight proof of my interest in your work, respecting which, I must confess I have hitherto felt more than I have expressed.

To the Editor.

May 30th. To Concord, 17 miles.—We left Boston at 11 o'clock, A. M. passed Cambridge, in whose classick